

# ***FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** February 15, 2018

**Agenda Item:** 2018-2019 Antelope Hunting Seasons

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 Min

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## **Background**

Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially for most game species. This happens every other year between December and final adoptions in February. In proposing regulations to the Commission, FWP proposes adopting the existing (2017) structure except for specific changes. Proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances. **Changes from December proposals are highlighted.**

2018 and 2019 antelope season structure changes include increased quotas and quota ranges to address increased and growing populations. FWP is proposing that the 900-20 early archery-only license application be a first and only choice with a separate, earlier drawing to be held in mid-July. This would allow successful applicants more time to plan their hunt before the Aug. 15 opening date. It would also allow FWP biologists a much-needed extra week to complete survey flights and make final quota changes for all the other any-weapon licenses, which could then be drawn in mid-Aug. Survey flights cannot start before early July because doe/fawn groups are not aggregated any earlier, and final quota adjustments are made using data from these surveys.

FWP also proposes to expand HD 313 in the upper Yellowstone because a new population of antelope has become established there over the past several years.

**HD 215: Introduce second doe/fawn license opportunity for holders of the 215-30 doe/fawn license**

All proposed changes are on the Commission Master List in the Commission Packet.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

Antelope season comments were received during the Aug.20 – Sept. 21 scoping and generally expressed satisfaction with antelope seasons. Additional public comment ran from Dec. 7 through Jan. 24 and we received 71 comments. Among those that spoke to the 900-20 change, most were opposed, however archers and The Montana Bowhunters Association are in favor. Other comments were hunting district-specific.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2017 (status quo). No change would challenge the supporting justifications behind proposals.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission adopt the 2018 and 2019 antelope hunting seasons and quotas as proposed.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the 2018 and 2019 antelope hunting seasons and quotas as presented by FWP, and that all other aspect of the regulations remain unchanged.